



PUBLIC HEALTH

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Washington State Department of Health
New School Site Approval
Washington State Board of Health

November 8, 2006

Why a site assessment?

- Parents expect their kids to be safe at school
- Some schools in WA have been built in places that are less-than-ideal from an environmental health standpoint
- Best remedy - an adequate environmental evaluation of the site prior to purchase or construction

Some school environmental health issues are related to location

- **Contaminated Soil**
 - Area-wide soil contamination
- **Air Toxics**
- Radon
- Odors
- Groundwater plume infiltration

Area-wide soil contamination

- Widespread arsenic and lead contamination in some parts of WA
- Use of lead arsenate pesticide throughout WA
 - Estimated ~180,000 acres, mostly in central WA
- Emissions from Tacoma Smelter, mostly in King, Pierce, Thurston, and Kitsap counties
 - Estimated ~ 300,000 acres

Area-wide Soil Contamination Task Force

- Ecology, DOH, Ag, and CTED assembled a task force in 2002 - 2003
- Goal: To get broad-based input about ways to address large-scale soil contamination
- 17 members (agriculture, public education, local government, environmental, business, realty, banking, insurance, local health)
- Child-use area recommendations
 - Mandatory soil testing at new sites

Area-wide Soil Contamination

New Law - RCW 70.140.030

- Relates to schools and child care facilities potentially affected by Tacoma Smelter (not agricultural areas)
 - Ecology to evaluate potential risks from arsenic and lead in soil and fix problems when found
- DOH to provide assistance to schools and child care facilities
- DOH to provide assistance to Ecology

Air Toxics

- Concern for fine particle toxicity
 - Asthma, heart disease, stroke
- Major roadways are a source
 - Levels decrease rapidly with distance
 - 500 foot buffer
- California recommends various buffers when siting schools near sources of air toxics

Conclusions

- Site assessments are valuable tools when siting any facility
- Proper siting reduces exposure to contaminants in the environment
 - Prevents costly evaluations and remediation
- No standardized approach currently required
 - ASTM #E 1527-05 – site assessment guidance
 - California guidance with respect to air emissions

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